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**A History of
Rutland High School,
Rutland, Vermont
(1855-2008)**



RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The new Rutland High School that opened on Library Avenue in 1929.

About the Author



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Introduction

This Quarterly documents the history of Rutland High School in Rutland, Vermont, that was authorized by the Vermont Legislature in 1841 and commenced with the early establishment of public high schools by the union of neighboring school districts. A description of the ensuing buildings located on Center Street, Library Avenue and Stratton Road during the period 1855 to 2008 is included.

TIME LINE

- 1782 – Vermont Law divided towns into school districts
- 1841 – Establishment of high schools by Vermont Legislature
- 1852 – Rutland Academy opens
- 1855 – Rutland Academy becomes Rutland Union High School
- 1879 – Extensive additions made
- 1892 – Rutland incorporated as a city
- 1909 – Assembly hall added to Rutland High School
- 1929 – New Rutland High School at Library Ave. & Church St. opens
- 1957 – New Junior High School at Grove St. & Library Ave. opens
- 1994 – New Rutland High School on Stratton Road opens

A History of Rutland High School, Rutland, Vermont (1855-2008)

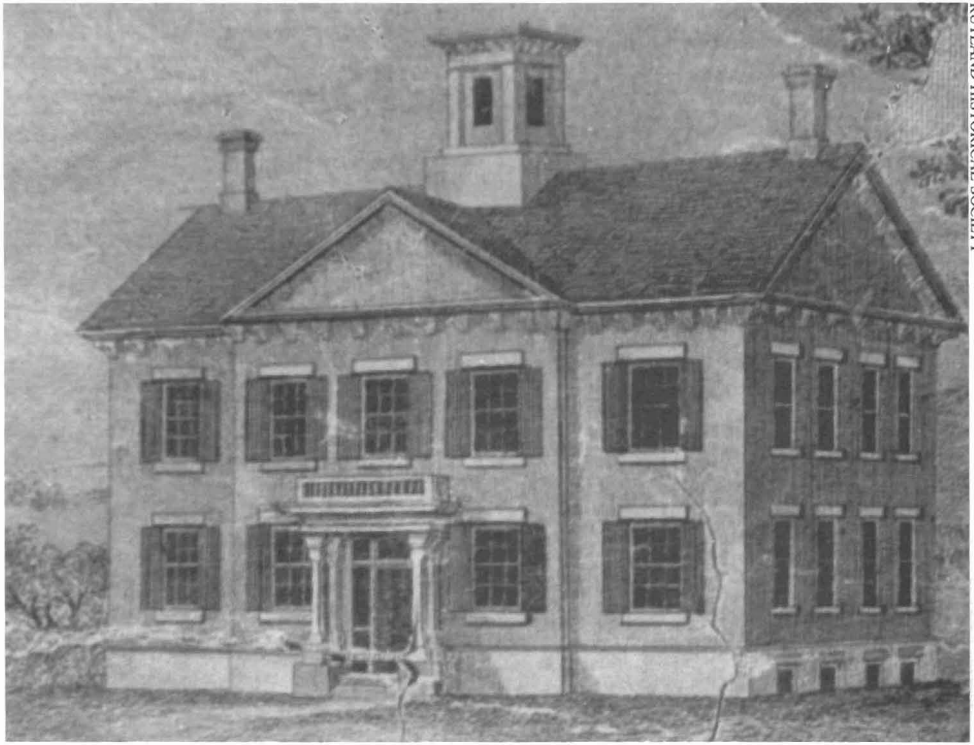
By Paul J. Crossman, Jr.

History of Rutland Academy (1852 to 1855)

The first constitution of Vermont contained this section: "A school or schools shall be established in each town by the Legislature, for the convenient instruction of youth, with such salaries to the masters, paid by each town, making proper use of school lands in such towns, thereby to enable them to instruct youth at low prices. One grammar school in each county, and one university in this state, ought to be established by the General assembly". The first general law of Vermont pertaining to primary schools was passed by the Legislature on 22 October 1782. This law provided for division of towns into school districts. It was the law under which the school system of Vermont started. In 1841 the Vermont Legislature authorized the establishment of public high schools by the union of neighboring districts for the benefit of the older and more advanced scholars of such districts.

During the organization and early settlement of the Town of Rutland a system of public instruction known as the "Common School" was inaugurated. In 1886 there were, exclusive of graded schools, 18 school districts in Rutland with an enrollment of 1680 pupils. Rutland graded schools were composed of one high school, five grammar schools, four intermediate schools, six secondary schools and five primary schools with a total enrollment of 1165 pupils and 23 teachers. Graded schools were free to all pupils in the graded district. Non-resident pupils were charged a tuition fee. Rutland had no form of higher education beyond the common schools with the exception of private schools. District schools were the only means of instruction until 1852 .

Then an Academy was opened in a new building erected at the southwest corner of what would become Center Street and South Main Street on the site presently occupied by the Rutland City Fire Station. Construction on the brick structure, which cost about five thousand dollars, was begun under the supervision of master mason JW Hickox of Syracuse, New York in 1851 and completed in 1852.



The Rutland Academy that was completed in 1852.

The following public notice appeared in the 26 August 1852 edition of the Rutland Herald:

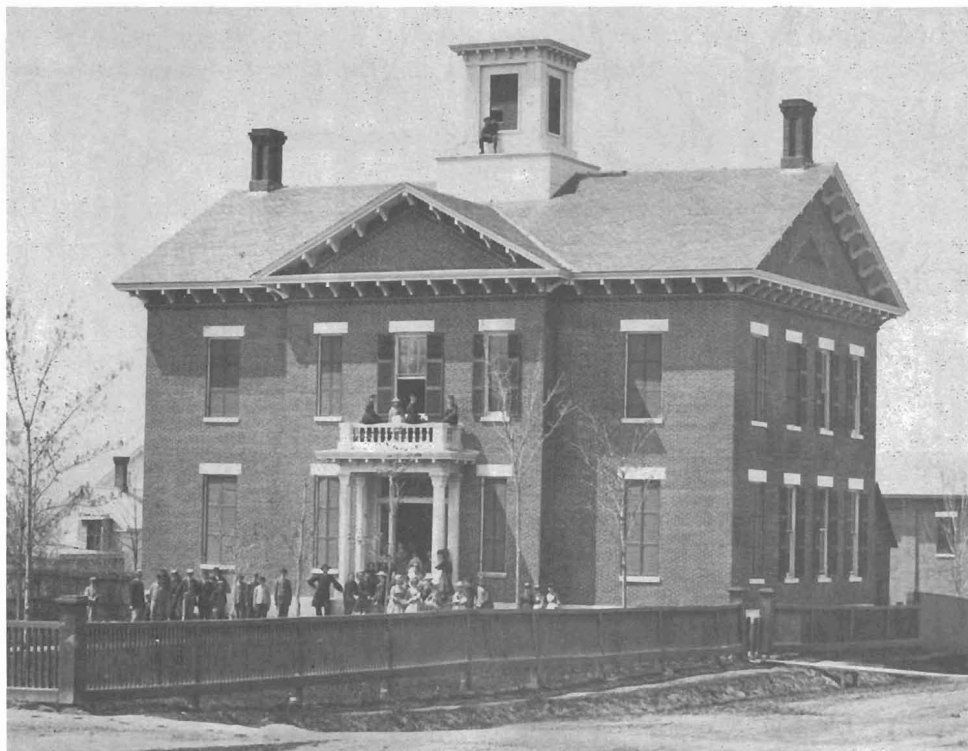
RUTLAND ACADEMY

This new institution will commence its first quarter on Monday 13 September 1852 under the charge of Mr. Luther Lowell, A.B. as principal. Measures have been taken to secure all the aid in the way of assistants that they may be found desirable. The several branches of education pursued in our best Academies will be attended to. The terms will be from three to five dollars per quarter for the usual studies. Arrangements have been made to furnish board with reputable private families as low as \$1.50 per week. / M.G. Everts, Clerk.

In 1852 the Rutland Academy opened its doors. The first term ran until November of that year. All scholars over the age of 14 could attend. Others between the ages of 12 and 14 had to pass an examination in geography, grammar and arithmetic before they were admitted. Luther Lowell was the first principal of the Academy from 1852 to 1854. George A. Weeks succeeded him from 1854-1855. The Academy ceased to exist with the spring term of 1855.

First High School – Center Street – 1855-1929

On 6 April 1855, after a public meeting of the four districts in Rutland, it was decided to establish a public high school. The trustees of the Rutland Academy, a private educational institution, decided to lease their building and land to the Rutland Union High School district for 500 years from 1 May 1855. The actual start date of the school was 29 August 1855 with EC Johnson and Miss Sarah Jewett as teachers. The high school was a basic four-room structure. Renovations included new seats and furniture, new outhouses, a fence and a new bell.



RUTLAND IN RETROSPECT

The Rutland Union High School that opened in 1855.

The course of study in the high school for 1855 included: Algebra, English Composition, Physical Geography, Geometry, Astronomy, Physics, U.S. History, English History, General History, English Literature, Greek, Latin, and Declamation (Oratory). Music was a required subject in 1855 and later became an elective in 1900.

In the first class, people came from Rutland, Wallingford, Sunderland, Pittsford, West Rutland, Northfield, East Wallingford, Brandon, Ohio, Wisconsin and Illinois.

During the 1857-1858 school year Rutland Union High School had four teachers: EC Johnson-Principal, Miss Sophie Phelps-Preceptress, Miss Fannie Page-Assistant, Miss Mariette Hicks-Assistant, and Mrs. AE Hopkins-Music. The student body was made up of 51 gentlemen and 82 ladies.

Under Rutland Union High School Rules and Regulations, Article II provided that "The bell shall be rung 15 minutes before school time, morning and afternoon, and again at the hour of commencing school. At the close of the second ringing the doors shall be shut and no absent scholar admitted for the half day unless presenting a written excuse from parent or guardian." Article III stated "The school shall be opened in the morning by the reading of a selected portion of scripture and such other religious exercises as the instructors may deem advisable."

Six students graduated from Rutland High School in 1857 including three young ladies: Miriam (Barrett) Dunton, Emma (McClure) Tuttle and Mary (Root) Tuttle. By 1861 the number of graduates had increased to 14. In 1890 there were none. By 1934 there were 196. During the span of 100 years 6149 students had graduated from Rutland High School.

In October 1857 the Rutland Herald reported that the high school had opened a library, the first such facility in town. EC Johnson, principal, masterminded it and also served as librarian. Seven thousand dollars had been raised by subscription and 1600 volumes were available to residents at the cost of one dollar a year.

By December 1858 DG Moore had succeeded Johnson as principal. His assistants were Miss Page and Miss Barrett. In 1860 Rutland had a sound educational system. There were 20 common schools, and a high school in each parish taught by licensed teachers. Two superintendents inspected the schools several times a year and also scrutinized the prudential committees whose purpose it was to exercise good judgment and common sense similar to our present day school board.

As the city population increased the original building was enlarged. A south wing was added, and the Center Street section became the main entrance. A fire station, designated as Station No. 2, which now houses the Rutland Historical Society at 96 Center Street, was paid an annual income to provide additional classroom space. Later, when the school became overcrowded, the second floor of the fire station and rooms in a nearby house were used for classes. Classes began at 9 am on regular days and ended at 3:15 pm. During the winter, classes began at 1 pm. If absent ten times a student was dismissed. School was conducted for ten months of the year. Vacation

was five weeks in the summer, two weeks in March/April and one week at Christmas. An eight-member Prudential Committee supervised school activities.

There were two courses of study: English and Classical & English. The English Course included Arithmetic, Geography, U.S. History, Grammar, Algebra, Poetry & Prose, Composition, Physiology, Astronomy, Botany, Rhetoric, Intellectual Philosophy, Moral Science, Calculus, Chemistry, Geology, Zoology, Logic, Political Economy and Theology. The Classical & English Course added Latin, Greek, Arithmetic, History, Geography, Virgil, Homer, Horace, Herodotus and Xenophon. Alternate classes were given in French, Italian and German.



RUTLAND IN RETROSPECT

The high school building had many additions.

Extensive additions were made to the South Main Street building in 1879 at a cost of \$20,000. In 1909 the last improvement was the construction of a spacious assembly hall for an additional \$33,000.

Diplomas were not presented to graduates until 1872. The Class of 1880 originated the idea of a Class Motto. School colors were chosen in 1890. The first orchestra was organized in 1901. Class news was reported in a school booklet called "The Oread" until "The Red & White" replaced it as a 64-page magazine in 1920. The first band was organized in 1929. At the former Rutland High School on Center Street, classroom space had been limited. In order to accommodate the entire student body, Grades 9 and 10 would attend classes from 8 am to 12 noon while Grades 11 and 12 would report from 1 pm to 5 pm.

Rutland High School – Library Avenue – 1929 to 1994

Rutland High School continued to exist in the Center Street building until 1928 when a new facility was constructed on Library Avenue on a 12-acre tract of land located at the corner of Library Avenue and Church Street. The land had been purchased from Horace H. Baxter for the sum of \$70,000. Horace Henry Baxter (1818-1884) was born in Saxtons River, Vermont, on 18 Jan 1818, moved to Boston with his family, and later, after several successful business ventures, returned to Vermont. In 1854, at the age of 36, Mr. Baxter bought a farm and home site on property located at the corner of Library Avenue and Church Street. Mr. Baxter then built a summer home on this property known as Grove Hall, which later came to be known as The Crestwood Hotel. The Crestwood was palace-like and spacious, and was eventually demolished some 90 years later in 1945.

The architecture of the new high school building was described as neo-classical revival style, brick veneer, three stories, and featured a parapet (low protective wall below the roof edge) with entry columns, marble, name inscription, decorative brickwork, stone carving, flat arches and entry entablature. The cost of the building, including the site, furniture and equipment, architect and engineering fees and other fees, excluding development of the grounds, was \$400,000. Grading and developing the grounds at the new high school was accomplished during 1929. Fifteen hundred to 2000 yards of earth were excavated and removed to allow for proper drainage, and for grading, seeding and fertilization of 6.5 acres of land for lawn and a recreation field, laying of walks, construction of a driveway and parking area, construction of a running track with drainage ditch filled with gravel, laying out fields for the various recreational activities of the high school, providing a sewer and catch basin for the low area north of the building, and erection of a fence on the west side of the property. Total cost was \$10,900. The High School Athletic Association and a few public-spirited citizens funded an additional \$2500 for the erection of a suitable fence around the perimeter of the recreational field.

Classes were held at the old high school on Center Street until 1 Jan 1929. On 4 February 1929 the new high school opened to 660 students. The student body from the high school on Center Street was transferred to the new building on Library Avenue. The dedication was held on 19 March 1929 with Judge Julius Wilcox presiding. Twenty five hundred people accepted the invitation to attend and included members of the Board of School Commissioners, members of the Board of Aldermen, the Mayor, members of the

Special Building Committee, representatives of the Vermont State Department of Education, and the Superintendent of Schools. It was pointed out that it cost \$300 per day to operate the new school. All rooms were equipped with comfortable movable seats, large blackboards and large study tables. Each room had separately controlled ventilation.

The first class to graduate from the new school was the Class of 1929. One hundred and thirteen seniors received their diplomas on 13 Jun 1929 at the Memorial Armory. At that time Leslie O. Johnson was the Principal, WH Fairchild was Superintendent of Schools, and George N. Harman was President of the Board of School Commissioners. College, General and Commercial courses were offered. The 56 piece High School orchestra was under the direction of Frank C. Phillips.

Competitive sports at Rutland High School started as early as 1900. They included football, basketball, baseball, track and tennis. Some of the notable coaches were Harold O'Brien, Ellery Purdy, James Evans, Lloyd Flaitz and Leo Keefe.

The 1929 class colors were Dark Blue and White. Class flower was Red Rose. Valedictorian was Barbara Butterfield. Ruth Berry was Salutatorian. Robert A. Stafford ex-Rutland alderman, a member of the Class of 1929, recalls the transition and has the distinction of being one of the first graduates of the new school. George Squier, another graduate of the Class of 1929, walked to school every day from his home on the East Road in Clarendon, a distance of four miles. He took four or five classes including chemistry, taught by Mr. Bump. George raised dahlias and gladiolas that he entered at the Vermont State Fair each year. He was awarded many first prize ribbons. In 2004 he was presented with the Floriculture Superintendant's Award in appreciation of his lifelong contributions to the fair.

In 1929 the School Student Council was formed to foster constructive cooperation and out-of-class activities. The athletic field was completed in 1929 and celebrated with a huge parade. In 1930 the yearbook "Talisman" appeared. In 1940 the Trade School was added at a cost of \$30,000. The Trade and Industrial curriculum included auto mechanics, woodworking, sheet metal and machine workshop. In 1955 Rutland High School had a faculty of 34 and a student body of 560. In the 1957-1958 school year teachers earned an average salary of \$4475 per year.

There were 21 classrooms with a capacity of 760 pupils. There was also a study hall, library, an 82 foot x 70 foot gymnasium, lunch room

and two locker and shower rooms. A home economics room with unit kitchens and a sewing room were provided for daily use by 144 girls. The school building covered about half an acre of land, another two acres for lawn, shrubbery, walks and driveway, and about five acres for a football field, one-fifth mile track, baseball field, tennis courts and a field hockey field.

On 23 April 1955 some 600 persons attended the Rutland High School Centennial celebration. A few of the older invited guests were: Mrs. Louis Brehmer, Class of 1881 (oldest living graduate at age 90); Miss Marion Harwood, teacher, Class of 1889; Miss Marion Monroe, teacher, 1904-1916; Miss Frederika Abraham, Class of 1889; Miss Ruth Temple, Class of 1902 and Miss Mabel Woods, Class of 1895.

Meldon School – Center Street – 1929 to 1956

The old Rutland High School building on Center Street, later known as Meldon School, was altered and improved to convert it for use as a junior high school by interior decorating, changing partitions in the south wing to provide six rooms of usable size, the addition of a fire escape, the installation of wardrobes in six rooms, and building a stage in the auditorium. New electrical wiring and fixtures were installed and new furniture and equipment were added for a total cost of \$19,000. Meldon Junior High School was named after Eleanor Meldon, a distinguished graduate who taught in the Rutland Public Schools for more than 50 years. Meldon School served as a Junior High School from 1929 to 1956 when it was abandoned, later torn down, and finally replaced by the new Koltonski Fire Station in 1969.

Eleanor J. Meldon (1856-1933)



Miss Meldon was educated in Rutland Public Schools and graduated from Rutland High School in 1872. Her teaching career spanned a 60-year period from 1873 to 1933. She began teaching as a private tutor

in private schools in 1873, and later taught grammar at Meldon School starting in 1879. From 1908 until the time of her death in 1933 she taught French at Rutland High School. She had specialized in the French language since entering high school as a student. Miss Meldon received the highest degree conferred by L'Alliance Francaise in Paris. She also studied at McGill University, Middlebury College, Columbia, and Wellesley. On 8 February 1929 the old high school was named Meldon Junior High School, honoring a teacher who had taught in Rutland for over 50 years. Miss Meldon died at the age 76 from pneumonia.

Transition Period (1957-1994)

A new junior high school with cafeteria and gymnasium was erected at the corner of Grove Street and Library Avenue, adjacent to the new high school, in 1957. The high school auditorium was completely renovated and re-dedicated in 1975. Rutland High School served its student population well for 65 years from 1929 to 1994. The Class of 1994 was the last class to graduate from this school. The high school building at 64-65 Library Avenue was subsequently converted to the new Rutland Intermediate School (Grades 3, 4, 5 and 6). The adjoining Junior High School at 67 Library Avenue was renamed the Rutland Middle School (Grades 7 and 8).



RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

New Junior High School built in 1957.



New high school gymnasium also built in 1957.



New Trade and Technical wing at Library Avenue built in the 1970s.

Rutland High School – 22 Stratton Road – 1994 to Present

The newest Rutland High School, located at 22 Stratton Road in Rutland, was opened for students on 1 September 1994. This facility was approved by a public bond vote on 7 November 1989 at a cost of 10.9 million dollars. Payments for the new building were from a bond that was separate from the school's annual operating budget. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held 4 May 1993. The total area was 115,000 square feet and was designed for a capacity of 1100 students with 55 teaching stations. Five stations are located within the adjacent Stafford Technical Center. An outdoor rope-and-cable confidence-building course, known as "Project Adventure", is located behind the school. The building is of steel frame construction allowing for future interior changes or expansion. Exterior siding is a split-faced concrete block topped with insulated STO brand surface. Roofs are pitched to internal drains. The entire building, interior and exterior, is well insulated to reduce operating costs. Heating is provided by forced hot water circulation with heat directed through ducts and an efficient heat recovery system that mixes with fresh air circulation designed to cut fuel consumption by 50%. Most of the furniture was recycled from business and industry, remanufactured, and purchased at an 80-90% discount. This significant cost reduction facilitated the purchase of computers for students, teachers and the public. Eighty per cent of the work on the building and grounds was provided by Rutland area and Vermont subcontractors. Almost all of the work was Vermont-based. The architect was New England Partnership of Montpelier, Vermont and the Construction Manager was Eckman Construction of Bedford, New Hampshire. The building features a 2 ½ story atrium with a 44-foot tall Palladin window and gable skylight roof to provide natural lighting, and it is equipped with a total of 925 built-in lockers, 325 Gateway 2000 Computers and a Multilis Automated Library System linked to the Rutland Free Library. Each classroom has a telephone and computer with WiFi capability and can connect with the Internet, Comcast local cable TV and Vermont Interactive Television. The library, also known as the Information Center or Media Center, contains 14,300 books and 24 computers with a link to the Rutland Free Library, Computers on Wheels (COW), and the Vermont Automated Library System with connections to the University of Vermont, Vermont State Colleges and Dartmouth College. The library is also open to the public during posted hours. By use of folding partitions, the theater can be divided into three separate rooms: a tiered lecture hall, an open center space and a

stage. In total they form an auditorium that seats 400 people. The wood floor gym has bleacher seating for 200 persons and sufficient floor space for three physical education classes. Major events are held at the former high school's 1500 seat Leo Keefe gym or 495-seat auditorium. Most classrooms accommodate 24 students. The first floor has separate rooms for band and chorus. Larger science lab rooms and language classrooms for French, German and Spanish are found on the second floor. Also located on the first floor are a 450-seat cafeteria, a guidance office, a school nurse office, and a television studio. For disabled persons the building is equipped with sloped ramps, an elevator and Braille signs for room identification. The daily schedule from 7:55 AM TO 3:05 PM has been restructured to allow fewer but longer class periods of 75-minutes each. Each student takes four long periods each day during the 16-week fall and spring semester terms. Enrichment and remedial courses offered at the end of the school year are known as the Year End Studies (YES) Plan, modeled after college schedules, and the first at a U.S. public high school. This program is designed to provide half day or full day courses, seminars, field trips, internships, community service and other teaching and learning opportunities, and is offered to all Rutland High School students. The academic program includes the following courses: English, Driver Education, Family and Consumer Services, Fine Arts, Music, Theater, Information Technology, Math, Physical Education, Science, Social Studies and Language (French, German, Spanish).

Stafford Technical Center, formerly called the Vocational-Technical Center, is an integral part of the new high school. Students were enrolled there for the first time in the fall of 1974. All-day year-long programming to students from eight participating high schools includes courses in Architectural Engineering Design, Auto Refinishing, Auto Technology, Cabinet Making, Carpentry, Digital Arts, Electrical/Plumbing, Information Technology, Systems and Solutions, Health Careers Academy, Hospitality and Entrepreneurship, Human Services, Music Technology, Jazz and Contemporary Music, Natural Resources, Forestry and Horticulture, Power Mechanics/Welding, Public Safety Services: Law Enforcement, Video Production and Culinary Arts. The "Doll House Restaurant" offers gourmet meals reasonably priced and prepared by 20 culinary arts students under the direction of head chef Barry Ferraro. The restaurant has a seating capacity of 40 and is open to the public. There is also a Continuing Education Evening Division that offers courses in Computer and Automotive Technology,

Woodworking, Welding, Business, Computer Software, Medical Education, Licensed Nurse Assistant, Languages, Cooking and Food Preparation, Arts & Crafts, and Website Development.

A School Resource Officer (SRO) program provides for a Rutland City police officer to be on site at the high school for identification and intervention with at-risk youths. This program serves as a role model for students and assists school administrators and staff with early mediation and mentoring. The current principal is Peter Folaes. Larry Lattanzi is the associate principal. Rutland has the third largest high school in Vermont. A few of the recognizable graduates of Rutland High School were U.S. Senator Robert T. Stafford (Class of 1931), Olympic Gold Medalist Andrea (Mead) Lawrence (Class of 1950), Miss USA 1955 Carlene (Johnson) Holloway (Class of 1951), U.S. Senator James Jeffords (Class of 1952) and skier Suzy Chaffee (Class of 1964).

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Stafford Technical Center at 8 Stratton Road.



Rutland High School, 22 Stratton Road, Rutland, Vermont, 2009